

§ 153A-143. Regulation of outdoor advertising.

(a) As used in this section, the term "off-premises outdoor advertising" includes off-premises outdoor advertising visible from the main-traveled way of any road.

(b) A county may require the removal of an off-premises outdoor advertising sign that is nonconforming under a local ordinance and may regulate the use of off-premises outdoor advertising within the jurisdiction of the county in accordance with the applicable provisions of this Chapter.

(c) A county shall give written notice of its intent to require removal of off-premises outdoor advertising by sending a letter by certified mail to the last known address of the owner of the outdoor advertising and the owner of the property on which the outdoor advertising is located.

(d) No county may enact or amend an ordinance of general applicability to require the removal of any nonconforming, lawfully erected off-premises outdoor advertising sign without the payment of monetary compensation to the owners of the off-premises outdoor advertising, except as provided below. The payment of monetary compensation is not required if:

- (1) The county and the owner of the nonconforming off-premises outdoor advertising enter into a relocation agreement pursuant to subsection (g) of this section.
- (2) The county and the owner of the nonconforming off-premises outdoor advertising enter into an agreement pursuant to subsection (k) of this section.
- (3) The off-premises outdoor advertising is determined to be a public nuisance or detrimental to the health or safety of the populace.
- (4) The removal is required for establishing, extending, enlarging, or improving any of the public enterprises listed in G.S. 153A-274, and the county allows the off-premises outdoor advertising to be relocated to a comparable location.
- (5) The off-premises outdoor advertising is subject to removal pursuant to statutes, ordinances or regulations generally applicable to the demolition or removal of damaged structures.

(e) Monetary compensation is the fair market value of the off-premises outdoor advertising in place immediately prior to its removal and without consideration of the effect of the ordinance or any diminution in value caused by the ordinance requiring its removal. Monetary compensation shall be determined based on:

- (1) The factors listed in G.S. 105-317.1(a); and
- (2) The listed property tax value of the property and any documents regarding value submitted to the taxing authority.

(f) If the parties are unable to reach an agreement on monetary compensation to be paid by the county to the owner of the nonconforming off-premises outdoor advertising sign for its removal, and the county elects to proceed with the removal, the county may bring an action in superior court for a determination of the monetary compensation to be paid. In determining monetary compensation, the court shall consider the factors set forth in subsection (e) of this section. Upon payment of monetary compensation for the sign, the county shall own the sign.

(g) In lieu of paying monetary compensation, a county may enter into an agreement with the owner of a nonconforming off-premises outdoor advertising sign to relocate and reconstruct the sign. The agreement shall include the following:

- (1) Provision for relocation of the sign to a site reasonably comparable to or better than the existing location. In determining whether a location is comparable or better, the following factors shall be taken into consideration:
 - a. The size and format of the sign.

- b. The characteristics of the proposed relocation site, including visibility, traffic count, area demographics, zoning, and any uncompensated differential in the sign owner's cost to lease the replacement site.
- c. The timing of the relocation.
- (2) Provision for payment by the county of the reasonable costs of relocating and reconstructing the sign including:
 - a. The actual cost of removing the sign.
 - b. The actual cost of any necessary repairs to the real property for damages caused in the removal of the sign.
 - c. The actual cost of installing the sign at the new location.
 - d. An amount of money equivalent to the income received from the lease of the sign for a period of up to 30 days if income is lost during the relocation of the sign.

(h) For the purposes of relocating and reconstructing a nonconforming off-premises outdoor advertising sign pursuant to subsection (g) of this section, a county, consistent with the welfare and safety of the community as a whole, may adopt a resolution or adopt or modify its ordinances to provide for the issuance of a permit or other approval, including conditions as appropriate, or to provide for dimensional, spacing, setback, or use variances as it deems appropriate.

(i) If a county has offered to enter into an agreement to relocate a nonconforming off-premises outdoor advertising sign pursuant to subsection (g) of this section, and within 120 days after the initial notice by the county the parties have not been able to agree that the site or sites offered by the county for relocation of the sign are reasonably comparable or better than the existing site, the parties shall enter into binding arbitration to resolve their disagreements. Unless a different method of arbitration is agreed upon by the parties, the arbitration shall be conducted by a panel of three arbitrators. Each party shall select one arbitrator and the two arbitrators chosen by the parties shall select the third member of the panel. The American Arbitration Association rules shall apply to the arbitration unless the parties agree otherwise.

(j) If the arbitration results in a determination that the site or sites offered by the county for relocation of the nonconforming sign are not reasonably comparable to or better than the existing site, and the county elects to proceed with the removal of the sign, the parties shall determine the monetary compensation under subsection (e) of this section to be paid to the owner of the sign. If the parties are unable to reach an agreement regarding monetary compensation within 30 days of the receipt of the arbitrators' determination, and the county elects to proceed with the removal of the sign, then the county may bring an action in superior court for a determination of the monetary compensation to be paid by the county to the owner for the removal of the sign. In determining monetary compensation, the court shall consider the factors set forth in subsection (e) of this section. Upon payment of monetary compensation for the sign, the county shall own the sign.

(k) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, a county and an off-premises outdoor advertising sign owner may enter into a voluntary agreement allowing for the removal of the sign after a set period of time in lieu of monetary compensation. A county may adopt an ordinance or resolution providing for a relocation, reconstruction, or removal agreement.

(l) A county has up to three years from the effective date of an ordinance enacted under this section to pay monetary compensation to the owner of the off-premises outdoor advertising provided the affected property remains in place until the compensation is paid.

(m) This section does not apply to any ordinance in effect on the effective date of this section. A county may repeal or amend an ordinance in effect on the effective date of this

section so long as an amendment to the existing ordinance does not reduce the period of amortization in effect on the effective date of this section.

(n) The provisions of this section shall not be used to interpret, construe, alter, or otherwise modify the exercise of the power of eminent domain by an entity pursuant to Chapter 40A or Chapter 136 of the General Statutes.

(o) Nothing in this section shall limit a county's authority to use amortization as a means of phasing out nonconforming uses other than off-premises outdoor advertising. (2004-152, s. 1.)